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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Joint Group to investigate politically-motivated illegal armed groups in El Salvador established today; to report to Salvadoran President and Secretary-General at end of six-month mandate.

+ Special Committee against Apartheid welcomes inaugural meeting yesterday of South Africa's Transitional Executive Council, which also marks lifting of oil embargo against country.

+ Security Council expresses support for Secretary-General's proposal that Western Sahara referendum be held no later than mid-1994; urges Moroccan Government and POLISARIO to cooperate with United Nations efforts to settle situation in area.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced the establishment of a Joint Group to investigate politically motivated illegal armed groups in El Salvador. The Group will have a six-month mandate, at the end of which it will report to the President of El Salvador and the Secretary-General, presenting its conclusions and recommendations and information received from a technical team of Salvadoran and foreign investigators.

The Joint Group, which will be autonomous, impartial and apolitical, will have its own institutional identity and will assist the Government of El Salvador in investigating illegal armed groups, as recommended by the Commission on the Truth. The investigation will cover the activities of such groups from 16 January 1992, the date on which the El Salvador Peace Accords were signed.

The Joint Group is made up of four Salvadorian lawyers: two independent Government representatives nominated by the President of El Salvador, José Leandro Echeverría and Juan Jerónimo Castillo; the National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights, Mauricio Molina Fonseca; and the Director of the Division of Human Rights of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), Diego García-Sayán.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid has welcomed the inaugural meeting in Cape Town yesterday of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). The Council will prepare South Africa for its first free and fair elections, and assist the Government until next April, when the elections are to be held. The Special Committee Chairman said in a statement that the inauguration of the TEC yesterday also meant the lifting of the oil embargo against South Africa, as decided by the General Assembly in resolution 48/1 adopted by consensus on 8 October.

The Special Committee commended continued efforts to negotiate with parties that had so far decided not to take part in the Council and the upcoming elections. It was vital, the Committee said, that the elections reflect the hopes and aspirations of all South Africans. The Committee urged the international community to continue its moral and material assistance to South Africans to help them achieve a non-racial democracy.

Meanwhile, the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa has recommended that its mandate be terminated when the General Assembly adopts its report. The Group noted in the report that the objectives of the oil embargo against South Africa had in many respects been achieved. It made its recommendation in view of the Assembly's resolution to lift the embargo when the TEC became operational, and in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the South African liberation movements.

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The Security Council has expressed its support for the Secretary-General's proposal that the referendum in Western Sahara be held no later than mid-1994. While regretting that the previous timetable, by which the referendum would have been held by the end of this year, could not be maintained, the Council fully subscribed to the Secretary-General's observations in that regard. In a letter from its President to the Secretary-General dated 6 December, the Council welcomed the progress already achieved in narrowing the differences between the views of the Moroccan Government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO).

The Council said that the compromise proposal outlined in the Secretary-General's latest report on the issue was a sound framework for determinining potential participation in the referendum, and expressed support for his determination to move ahead with voter registration and identification. The Council urged both parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in their efforts to achieve a speedy settlement of the situation in Western Sahara.

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